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Libyan Bedouin MT9

[For information on the Bedouin concept of laf in which a stranger group, sometimes of "client tribe" origin, attaches itself to the dominant clan in an area, and through some fiction, myth or fraud grafts their branch of descent on to the genealogical tree of this clan, see Categories 608 and 619.]

*613 619 fictive, has practical political consequences only at the tertiary and secondary levels of segmentation. Most political activity in al-Qasr is the result of either cooperation or conflict between corporate groups the size of Bait 'Umar or 'Ailit Ma'fas. 'Ailit Ma'fas is made up of five structurally replicated political groups such as Bait 'Umar. Toward outsiders, [609] these five groups act as one; they represent a corporate entity before the rest of the tribe. As a member of 'Ailit *613 619 Ma'fas, an individual has jural status in the whole tribe. 554 He also has the means and the moral obligation to articulate his interests and to settle his arguments with other members of the tribe. When an individual is involved in an activity which relates to matters of power and authority, he is playing a political role in the political process. The units which make up the internal and external political systems of the 'Aishaibat tribe of al-Qasr are roles. Roles then are the 121 *613 analytical focus of this study. Of course, I realize that 619 the concrete entities present in al-Qasr are human beings. 554 I only use roles as methodological constructs in order to abstract from, and to understand, Bedouin behavior. By conceptualizing sets of roles as structures, we will be able to understand the internal and external political structures as well as the traditional and modern political structures of Bedouin society. In al-Qasr, these political roles and structures emerge from the more generalized kinship structure

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648 been infrequent in al-Qasr. The 'awaaqil of al-Qasr and the police of al-Qasr have an agreement that Bedouin problems are the jurisdiction of the desert leaders, and that the police will intervene only when their help is requested. The Bedouins claim that in the 1930's, the Egyptians tried to do away with Bedouin law but soon discovered their own penal code to be inoperative in the desert. Against "outsiders," the
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69 Bedouin is duty bound to protect his kinsmen, and hence justice could not be satisfied. One 'aqila said that "only the 'awaiyid
*613
682 Awlad 'Ali can maintain order because it stops wars through
182 payment of blood-money." If a Bedouin, for some reason or other, takes his case to the police in Matruh, he will be
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648 returned to his 'aqila; he will be told that they can do
*613 nothing for him without the permission of his 'aqila. There are exceptions to this rule which complicate modern Bedouin
692 judicial procedure. For instance, in cases which involve
685 government property, such as olive trees and government-
648 operated water systems, a man may legitimately deal with the
*613 police. In one case in al-Qasr, a man's goats destroyed a number of his neighbor's olive trees. The police decided that the owner of the goats should pay the value of the trees. In another case, a man who had constructed small earth dikes in such a way that rain water was prevented from flowing onto his neighbor's land was forced against his will to remove the obstruction. His neighbor had taken his complaint to the

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
Cyrenaica

Second, the fiction that nothing has happened, which characterises the father's behavior, does not cease with the termination of the celebrations. Each morning, soon after daybreak and before the camp is astir, the groom must leave his bride and repair to his father's tent to lie at his father's side "as he always had done in the past, as if he had not left him." This conventional ruse is followed, not just for the seven days of wedding festivities, but is continued after the groom has moved back into the camp proper, and pitched his tent alongside his father's, with the ropes of the two tents crossing.

In matters other than sleeping arrangements, this fiction that "nothing has happened" is maintained. Marriage does not mean the immediate creation of a wholly separate domestic unit. Save for the appearance of an additional tent, the ordinary run of daytime activities is scarcely altered. To mention perhaps the most important feature of the relationships between father and son, the groom continues to eat with his father. As yet, the son does not use his own bowl,[1] and may not, indeed, do so for several years. The important symbolism of "eating together" or "eating out of the one bowl," the act of commensality creating a bond of fellowship about which Robertson Smith[2] wrote so eloquently can only be referred to here in one of its many aspects. Bedouin themselves stress that eating together is a strong bond, and the communal meal is always used for this purpose after the settlement of a dispute, or at the conclusion of a blood-money agreement, and so on. It is significant also in the sense that those who partake of a meal accept the authority of the host; he becomes their protector, and a blow against one of them is struck at him also. Even if the guest is an enemy,[3] as long as he has eaten from another's bowl his life is safe.

The slaughter of an animal for another person creates a bond which has its roots in the intimate connection between man and his animals. In a very vivid way, the Bedouin view their animals as part of themselves, as part of their *Risiq*, their general wealth, in which their sons are included. It is this mystical association between a man and his animals which distinguishes a meal consisting of the meat of an animal slaughtered from ones' own flock or herd from a meal consisting of meat bought from a butcher's shop — often given by the plateau peoples of Northern Cyrenaica to their guests, but which the camel-herding Bedouin of the south regard as despicable hospitality. A slaughtered animal is the food, *par excellence*, which establishes this bond

[1] When Bedouin take their meals, they eat from large wooden bowls imported from south of the Sahara. It is a matter of custom that a man does not eat alone unless it is unavoidable, a custom of such strength, that, when, one day, only an elder, occupying a tent the ropes of which were crossed with mine, was left in camp, he brought his bowl into my tent "so that I will be eating with a man."

[2] William Robertson Smith. *The Religion of the Semites*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1927.

[3] A stranger entering a camp is under no obligation to give his identity. Few do so until they have partaken of a meal. In the past, the Bedouin claim, the period of anonymity could last for 40 days, but nowadays, they say they limit it to two only. I have known strangers enter a camp, receive entertainment, and leave without offering any specific identity.

9: Murray E, K-3, 4 (ca. 1910-1935) 1935 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
Egypt

Had the Senussi been successful in the last war, they would no doubt have brought in the 'Ibeidat or the 'Awaqir from Cyrenaica to replace the Awlad 'Ali in Egypt.

At the present day the Awlad 'Ali, especially the eastern sections near the Nile Valley, have almost ceased to be nomadic, and only the old men have memories of their former warlike habits. They suffered considerably during the Great War, but are again becoming prosperous. They now own large comfortable tents, are beginning to build houses and clear out cisterns, and are also said to be increasing in numbers.[1] So civilized have they grown that my guides, one a Sinai Arab and the other an 'Abadi, concurred in calling them "green"—not real desert-worthy Bedouins.

Perhaps as a result of Libyan influence, or more probably the better nurture and climate, they are taller, heavier, stronger, and lighter-complexioned than the lightly built Arabs of Sinai and Hijaz. Also they are much franker and more straightforward than their shifty and suspicious eastern cousins, and altogether more trustworthy. Their women only veil themselves to strangers, and talk quite naturally and cheerfully to the men of their own tribe.

They cultivate as much barley as they can, using a primitive plough drawn by camels, in the clayey hollows scattered over their very stony limestone desert, but, as the rainfall is very uncertain, a good crop only occurs every five or six years. After harvest, they exchange some of their barley for maize, which the women grind to make bread as required, and some for dried dates. The seed for next year is buried in a hole lined with straw and covered with clay, and a year's forage for the animals is set aside. The rest of the crop goes to market, and for a short time the Arab has money to buy clothes for himself and his family and at utmost need to pay off some of the numerous debts he has inherited from his forefathers. Soon he is reduced again to the clothes he wears, the tent he sleeps in, and his animals grazing in the desert.

They are great breeders of camels and sheep, and a busy traffic in these goes on weekly in the markets of Hammam, 'Amriya, and the Beheira. So they have got into the habit

[1] At the 1927 census, the Western Desert Arabs, Awlad 'Ali, Jawabis, etc., numbered 38,928 souls exclusive of those settled in Beheira. But Pacho, 100 years ago, estimated them at 38,000 souls.